promote the growth of processed food sector in the country. Some of these are as under:—

(i) Under the Plan Schemes of the Department of Food Processing Industries, financial assistance in the form of soft loan and grant is provided to private industries, public sector undertakings, Non-Governmental Organizations, Co-operatives, Human Resource Development Organizations and Research & Development Institutions etc. for the development of processed food sector.

(ii) Food Processing Industries have been included in the list of priority sector for bank lending.

(iii) Most of the processed food items have been exempted from the purview of licensing under Industries (Development & Regulation) Act, 1951.

(iv) Approval for foreign equity in automatic route is available for most of the processed food items except alcohol and beer and those reserved for small scale sector subject to certain conditions.

The proposed national Policy on Food processing envisages creation of enabling environment for developing this sector and infrastructural facilities. The proposed Processed Food Development Act envisages harmonization and simplification of existing laws, development orientation, creation of a development fund, defining standards through a Processed Food Authority etc.

Decline in agricultural production

†∗614. SHRI GOPALSINH G. SOLANKI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been any fall in the Gross Domestic Product, compared to last year, due to the decline in agricultural production in some States;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) what measures Government have takeivpropose to take in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI NITISH KUMAR): (a) and (b) According to the Advance Estimates of National Income, 2000-2001 released by the Central Statistical Organisation, the growth rate of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at 1993-94 prices is 6.0 percent in the year 2000-01 as compared to 6.4 per cent in the previous year, whereas Agriculture & Allied sector consisting of agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry and fishing, has recorded an increased growth of 0.9 per cent in the year 2000-01 as compared 0.7 per cent in the previous year. As such, the decline in the growth rate of GDP in the year 2000-01 is not due to the performance of agriculture sector.

(c) For increasing production and productivity in the agriculture sector so as to have a sustained growth in the overall economy, some of the recent initiatives taken by the Government are:

- Launching of the Macro Management Mode to promote region-specific agricultural planning and development.
- Launching of a Technology Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture in the North-Eastern region.
- Formulation of a Programme for On-Farm Water Management to exploit ground-water resources in Eastern India.
- Operationalisation of a Technology Mission on Cotton.
- Effective implementation of the National Watershed Development Project for Rainfed Areas.
- Implementation of the National Agriculture Insurance Scheme.
- Increasing the availability of farm credit through the Kissan Credit Card Scheme, and by ensuring that 18% of net bank credit is earmarked for agriculture.

- Expansion of the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund and lowering of the interest rate.
- Provision of capital subsidy for construction, modernization and expansion of storages and cold storages.
- Formulation of a new subsidy-linked scheme for establishment of rural godowns.
- Promotion of the food processing industry and value addition in the agriculture through excise exemptions and other interventions.
- Reforms in seeds sector legislation and procedures to provide a facilitative climate for investment, besides enhancing seed replacement rates.

Performance of electrified rail routes

*615. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that ever since the Indian Railways began electrifying their main routes, no independent review of the performance of electrified routes has been done by the Ministry;

(b) if so, the total investment made by the Ministry on electrification of routes and the routes which could not be electrified till today; and

(c) the reasons for not conducting review of the performance of electrified routes and by when full review in this regard is likely to be undertaken?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI NITISH KUMAR): (a) While no reivew the performance of electrified routes by an agency independent of the Ministry of Railways has been carried out, the performance of electrified routes is reviewed every year in the form of traction-specific line haul cost, compiled by the Statistics Directorate of the Ministry of Railways. However, a Committee has